

CHAPTER XVII: ESTABLISHING A FORT

Fort Winfield Scott 1912-1913

In 1912 the U.S. Army realized a dream that had been in the making for at least the past twenty years – a coast artillery post to guard San Francisco Bay. Back in 1882 the War Department named the masonry fort at Fort Point and a scattering of wood frame barracks, quarters, and shops in its vicinity "Fort Winfield Scott" in honor of the deceased Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, general in chief of the U.S. Army from 1841 to 1861 and who visited San Francisco in 1858 at the height of the international boundary controversy concerning the United States and British North America – the San Juan Islands. The orders establishing the fort did not set physical boundaries to separate it from the Presidio of San Francisco and the Presidio's post headquarters continued to administer the area. Troops occupied Fort Point during the Civil War and from time to time thereafter. The last company to occupy the masonry fort made a hasty evacuation on the morning of the 1906 earthquake. Fort Point, as it was generally called, was deemed unsafe for occupancy thereafter.¹

Beginning in the 1890s the Corps of Engineers began a massive construction project to modernize the coastal defenses of San Francisco. The Presidio headlands became armed with mighty concrete emplacements for both guns and breech-loading mortars. In 1901 the Congress established the Artillery Corps that consisted of 30 batteries of field artillery and 126 companies of coast artillery. As the Presidio's modern coastal defenses became operational, the number of coast artillery companies at the post increased. While the Presidio's infrastructure grew to accommodate the growing garrison, it quickly became apparent that a major change was necessary. Not only had the coast artillery men been compelled to march 1½ miles one way to reach their batteries, higher authority had decided that the reservation should be divided with an infantry post in the east and an artillery post in the west.

A half-hearted beginning occurred in 1902 with the construction of two sets of officers' quarters (1302 a single and 1304 a duplex) and a barracks (682), all wood frame, west of the national cemetery. Funds for additional construction were diverted to other, more urgent programs following the 1906 earthquake.

1. War Department, General Orders 133, November 25, 1882. In 1914 the masonry fort was remodeled for military prison purposes but it never served as such.

Artillery reorganization in 1907 completely separated the field and coast artillery and the Coast Artillery Corps (CAC) was born. A company's strength increased from 65 to 95 men, and later to 105. The urge to create a separate post intensified.

In 1906 a crude temporary barracks for one Coast Artillery company had been erected on the bluff above Fort Point. An inspector general described it as shingled on the exterior but unfinished on the interior. A toilet and washroom stood nearby, but the occupying soldiers went without showers. Then, in April 1909, the Chief of Coast Artillery reminded the Quartermaster General that Fort Winfield Scott's construction should be provided for in the next appropriations bill. Conditions at the Presidio had become most crowded and some of the Coast Artillerymen lived in tents. Congress passed an appropriation and a map prepared in September 1909 showed a general layout of the proposed post and indicated that construction had begun.²

Construction completed in 1909:

Three sets of officers' quarters (1300, single; 1308 quadraplex; and 1310, duplex) bracketing the 1902 sets, all five standing toward the east end of today's Kobbe Avenue.

Four sets of quarters for noncommissioned officers (1261, 1263, 1265, and 1268) about 800 feet east of the future parade ground.

Also under construction, three barracks buildings (1206, 1207, and 1208) graced the west side of the future parade, but were not completed until 1910. Of interest, a 1909 map showed the 1902 barracks (682) becoming a post hospital. Such was not to be.³

Construction continued in 1910 and work included three additional barracks (1216, 1217, 1218); a quartermaster storehouse (1219); and six sets of officers' quarters (1314, single; 1320, duplex; 1322, single; 1324, duplex; 1326, duplex, and 1328, duplex) extending westward along Kobbe Avenue. While

2. C.J. Baily, April 10, 1909, to QMG; R.R. Stevens, June 28, 1909, to Department of California, General Correspondence 1890-1914, OQMG, RG 92, NA.

3. Map, "Fort Winfield Scott, California," 1909, Blueprint File, RG 92, NA. This map differs from the fort as it was constructed.

construction slowed in 1911, the Construction Quartermaster completed two additional barracks (1202 and 1203) on the west side of the parade, and a combination post exchange and gymnasium (1226) east of the parade in what would become an industrial area. The new fort essentially reached completion in 1912. New construction included the imposing headquarters building (1201), two more barracks (1204 and 1205) also west of the parade, the guardhouse (later called the stockade, 1213), and infirmary (1224), three additional sets of noncommissioned officers' quarters (1272, 1273, and 1274), and one more officers' quarters (1334, a quadruplex) at the west end of officers' row.

The handsome buildings of the post proper stood on a plateau east of the concrete batteries. They ranged around the horseshoe-shaped parade ground (1223). The 1907 proposals by Harts, Devol, and others to depart from traditional army architecture and adopt the Mission Revival style was realized at Fort Scott's main post. The buildings around the parade ground were designed in a most pleasing, mostly stucco-covered concrete, Mission Revival architecture adapted to military use. The precept established here was followed throughout the Presidio military reservation in future years. (It is not known if the Army accepted Major Harts' recommendation to employ civilian architects at this time.) Officers' row on Kobbe Avenue, however, was built from standard army plans. The residences possessed a mixture of Mediterranean Revival style (cream-colored stuccoed walls, tiled roofs, and entrance porticos having wrought-iron railings) and a Colonial Revival style (brick walls, dormers, a variety of porches, and some tiled roofs). Kobbe Avenue acquired two additional sets of quarters in 1915 – a Bachelor Officers' Quarters (Barnard Hall, 1330) and quarters for the commanding officer (1337) on the north side of the avenue.

The coast artillery companies began occupying the new quarters as they were completed, some as early as 1910. Most of the troops, however, moved to the area in May and early June 1912. When the post became fully occupied in 1912 the complement stood at eleven companies but only ten barrack buildings lined the parade. Consequently one company continued to occupy the temporary barracks on the Fort Point headlands until the post's strength was reduced.⁴

Electricity for the new post became a matter of discussion as early as 1910. That year the Engineer Department decided on a central power plant to supply electricity to all the Presidio's coastal defenses –

4. Fort W. Scott, Post Returns, June 1912.

the batteries, fire control stations, searchlights, etc. The building that had supplied power for the old dynamite guns had been destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. The Engineers decided to reconstruct the building, 1398. It contained a boiler room, engine room, shop, storeroom, and lavatory. By the spring of 1910 the equipment was in place:

- Two 200 horsepower Keeler, water tube boilers
- Two Buffalo Forge, single cylinder, non-condensing steam engines.
- Two 100 KW, DC Western Electric generators.
- One 4-panel Walker Electric switchboard (still in place in 1994)
- Two oil storage tanks.

The engineers also installed new wiring throughout the system and a few of the batteries continued to maintain standby generators for emergencies. The question arose whether the central power plant could also supply power to the post. An investigation disclosed an earlier regulation: "That the current from the fortification plants, when not needed for fortification service, may be used for garrison" purposes. The engineers, noting that all fortification wiring had been placed underground, recommended the same for the post, "In my opinion the furnishing of post lights [by the central plant] would be advantageous, as the plant would be kept ready for service at all times." Events, however, turned out differently. By 1912 commercial electricity had extended throughout both the Presidio of San Francisco and Fort Winfield Scott.⁵

On February 16, 1912, the Army's Adjutant General addressed a letter to the Commanding General, Western Division, San Francisco:

The Secretary of War directs that as soon as the new barracks at Fort Winfield Scott, California, are ready for occupancy, that the post be established as an independent coast artillery post, and that the headquarters of the Artillery District of San Francisco be located there. Fort Winfield Scott will, however, be a sub-post of the Presidio of San Francisco for the purpose of obtaining quartermaster's and subsistence supplies.⁶

5. J.C. Johnson, "The Electric Lighting and Power Plant for Fortification and Fire Control Purposes, Fort Winfield Scott," *Journal of the U.S. Artillery* (1911), 36:44; J. Biddle, January 31, 1910, to Chief of Engineers, San Francisco District, and March 21, 1910, to J.A. Lundeen, Letterbooks 1909-1910, OCE, RG 77, NA.

6. About the same time that the War Department announced that Fort Winfield Scott would house the Headquarters, Artillery District of San Francisco, it said that Fort Miley would have the Headquarters, Pacific Coast Artillery District, consisting of the coast defenses of San Diego, San Francisco, the Columbia, and Puget Sound. Also, Fort Miley became a sub-post of Fort Winfield Scott. War Department, *Annual Report 1913*, 3:71.

The great day came on June 19, 1912:

Fort Winfield Scott, California, garrisoned by the 3d Band, Coast Artillery Corps, the 10th, 13th, 27th, 29th, 38th, 57th, 60th, 64th, 65th, 67th, 147th, and 158th Companies, Coast Artillery Corps, was established an Independent Post from the Presidio of San Francisco, California, at 12:00 o'clock noon, on the 19th day of June 1912, per General Orders No. 11, Western Division dated June 18th, 1912

The new post's first general orders appointed Col. John P. Wisser as the commanding officer.⁷

The *San Francisco Call* headlined "Two Army Posts Now In Presidio." It continued, "The new quarters are among the most elaborate and modern in the United States, and when the landscape features are completed, Fort Winfield Scott will be the finest, as it is already the most beautifully located, army post in the country".⁸

Any celebrations must have been muted a few days later by the publication of Special Orders appointing a board of officers to investigate the death by drowning of a private belonging to the 158th Company. The fort swiftly settled down to business with the publication of General Orders announcing the Service and Roll Calls:

	Summer	Winter
First Call	5:45 am	6:30 am
Reveille	5:55	6:40
Assembly	6:00	6:45
Setting up exercises	6:00	6:45
Recall	6:15	7:00
Mess Call	6:20	7:05
Sick Call	7:00	7:30
Fatigue Call	7:30	
Drill, CAC, First Call	8:15	
Assembly	8:25	
Recall, Drill, CAC	10:00	
Drill, Infantry, First Call	10:30	
Assembly	10:40	

7. Fort Winfield Scott, Post Returns, June 1912; and General Orders 1, June 20, 1912, RG 393, NA.

8. *The San Francisco Call*, June 18, 1912.

Recall	11:30	
Guard Mounting, First Call	11:15	
Assembly	11:20	
Officers' Call	11:40	
First Sergeant's Call	11:45	
Officers' School (during school term)	11:45	
Mess Call	12:00 m	
Recruit Drill, First Call	12:50 pm	
Assembly	12:59	
Fatigue Call	1:00	
Recall, Recruit Drill	2:00	
Recall, Fatigue	4:30	
Mess Call	5:00	
Retreat, First Call	5:25	4:30
Assembly	5:35	4:40
School Call, Enlisted Men	5:50	
Tattoo	9:00	
Call to Quarters	10:45	
Taps	11:00	
Thursdays		
Signal Drill, First Aid Instruction, First Call	8:35 am	
Assembly		8:45
Recall		9:30 ⁹

A day later post headquarters published the fourteen-page Guard Orders. Among the highlights of the extensive orders:

Guards issued five blank cartridges and five "guard" cartridges each.

Cameras not allowed without a permit.

No boys or civilians allowed in or around government buildings.

On sighting a warship, the Commander of the Guard reported it to the Officer of the Day and the Post Adjutant. If a foreign warship, its nationality reported.

Automobiles – 10 miles per hour limit (6 miles on curves).

It then listed the fifteen guard posts:

1. The walk in front of the guardhouse (later called stockade).
2. Cell room of guardhouse around the cages.

9. Fort Winfield Scott, General Orders 2, June 25, 1912, RG 393, NA.

3. Supernumerary post, guardhouse.
4. Batteries Godfrey and Boutelle.
5. Batteries Marcus Miller and Lancaster.
6. Battery Cranston and (via lighthouse bridge) old Fort Point.
7. Dynamite Battery area.
8. Battery Saffold to Officers' Quarters (later, 1334).
9. Rob Hill area.
10. Battery Chamberlin and Mining Casemate.
11. Batteries McKinnon and Stotsenberg..
12. Officers' Row.
13. Wharf and Mine Depot.
14. Batteries Blaney, Slaughter, Sherwood, and Baldwin.
15. Roving Patrol.¹⁰

Colonel Wisser and his successors set about to improve the new post further. The Signal Corps installed a complete post telephone system. In September a two-kilowatt radio station began military operation. The Army invested considerable time in planning the beautification of the area. A board of officers presented its proceedings in July:

That the horseshoe area between the barracks and the guardhouse be graded for a general service parade and that the surface be oiled and sanded similar to the upper parade ground at the Presidio. A grass parade would be too costly – water and gophers.

That the field outside the barracks-horseshoe (to the north) be graded and improved as a drill ground. Seeded.

That suitable lawns be provided in front of Officers' Row.

That the ground in rear of and between the several barracks and other buildings be made into lawns.

That the space fifty feet in front of the barracks and other buildings facing the parade be planted in lawn and enclosed by a hedge of red geraniums.

10. Fort Winfield Scott, General Orders 3, June 26, 1912, RG 393, NA.

That flowers be planted closer to the barracks.

That flowers be planted in the yards of officers' quarters.

That a nursery be carefully maintained and replenished with fresh slips as plants are removed.¹¹

That a row of eucalyptus be set out around the parade ground opposite the intervals between the buildings – about thirty feet in front of the line of lawns.

That acacia and other low-growing trees and shrubs be planted to protect the eroded ground near the road at the north end of the drill ground, but not to obstruct the view of the bay.

That a line of eucalyptus trees be continued up McDowell Avenue (Lincoln Boulevard) to protect the drill ground from westerly winds.

That the triangular space between McDowell Avenue and the western line of barracks be a lawn with flower beds and separated from the road by a hedge of daisies.

That the trees in front of Officers' Row be thinned out to provide a view of the bay and that these trees be cleaned up to form a park grove.¹²

When forwarding the board's proceedings, the commanding officer, Maj. William C. Davis, wrote that the post was formally organized as an independent command on June 19, it being established in the new administration building that day. Concerning the officers' quarters he wrote that they stood high above the road in front, making the delivery of coal and the removal of garbage awkward. Also, because the houses were built on a steep slope, there were deep excavations in the rear that would become a sea of mud in the rainy season. He recommended construction of a paved service road fifteen feet wide. He also believed that concrete sidewalks were needed in front of both the officers' and the noncommissioned

11. The nursery was constructed, it being the third on the reservation, Letterman and the Presidio having similar ones.

12. Proceedings of a Board of Offices, July 1, 1912, General Correspondence, 1890-1914, OQMG, RG 92, NA.

officers' quarters.¹³

Major Davis published general orders soliciting the cooperation of everyone to improve and beautify the post. He too stressed its magnificent location and its diversified landscape with trees, ravines, and cliffs. All kinds of plants and flowers could grow year round. Fort Winfield Scott could become one of the most attractive places in the world. By the following spring another board of officers reported on the work in progress – clearing woods, hauling away brush, rebuilding roads with rock from the Rob Hill quarry, improving lawns, and cultivating gardens and the plant nursery.

A memorandum drew attention to the animals kept on the post: hog pens to be thoroughly policed; cow stables near the barracks to be removed; new stables to be whitewashed; only well cured manure to be used as fertilizer; and cows testing positive for tuberculosis to be disposed.¹⁴

The post's strength in these early years stood at 30 officers and 950 enlisted men. Noncommissioned officers on the staff included a sergeant major, senior grade; sergeant major, junior grade; four ordnance sergeants; three master electricians; four electrical sergeants, 1st class; an electrical sergeant, 2d class; four master gunners; and a fireman. In September 1912 general orders announced the retirement of Ordnance Sgt. Richard Ulex after more than thirty-one years of continuous service, since 1881. In addition to troop duty, the officers had additional assignments: recruiting officer, post artillery engineer, district artillery engineer, post librarian, post ordnance officer, district ordnance officer, signal officer, prison and police officer, fire marshal, and post exchange officer. Also a post surgeon had charge of the infirmary.¹⁵

In July 1913 the Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison, accompanied by the Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, and the Quartermaster General Maj. Gen. James B. Aleshire, visited the fort. Early Coast Artillery Corps commanding officers of note included Col. John P. Wisser, also commander of the Pacific Coast Artillery District; Col. Richmond P. Davis, for whom the great 16-inch gun battery at Fort

13. W.C. Davis, July 15, 1912, to AG, U.S. Army, General Correspondence 1890-1914, OQMG, RG 92, NA.

14. Memorandum 17, 1912; Memorandum 39, March 24, 1913; and General Orders 8, July 19, 1912, RG 393, NA.

15. Fort Winfield Scott, General Orders 13, September 23, 1912, RG 393; Post Returns, July and December 1912, NA.

Funston was named; Col. John P. Haines, whose uniforms and equipment were presented to the Presidio Army Museum; and Col. William F. Hase, for whom the artillery post Fort Hase in Hawaii was named.¹⁶

Parades, inspections and holiday observances quickly became part of the fort's routine. On Memorial Day 1913 the flag remained at half-staff from sunrise to twelve noon. At noon the band played, Battery Blaney fired the national salute, and soldiers raised the flag to the top of the staff. A month later the ten companies organized into two battalions for the purpose of infantry drill, parade, muster, and inspection. In July a detail fired a salute to the Peruvian flag from the post's two 6-pounder guns as Peru selected a site for its exposition building. Fort Winfield Scott, with its magnificent setting and outstanding architecture, had become a permanent, important part of the United States' Pacific coastal defenses.¹⁷

16. File R-1, Commanders, Fort Winfield Scott, Master Plans, DEH, PSF.

17. Fort Winfield Scott, General Orders 20, May 28, and 25, June 18, 1913; Memorandum July 20, 1913, RG 393, NA.